Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT MONDAY, February 10, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "USING FROZEN MEAT." Information from the office of Experiment Stations and the Bureau of Animal Industry, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

Not many years ago frozen meat was a novelty in the home kitchen. A steak or a roast frozen solid would have been a surprise package to almost any housewife. As for putting up your own farm-raised meat by freezing in a locker plant, that was an idea only a few people had ever considered.

How fast times change! According to the last count, the United States now has well over 3 thousand freezer-locker plants; and thousands of families on farms take their meat to the plant for freezing, and use frozen meat regularly every day. For that matter a good many town and city families now buy and use frozen meat. The big centers for locker plants are in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest. But just lately locker plants have been moving into the South. Only 4 States are left with no locker plants—a couple of New England States and two in the South.

No wonder so many housewives write and ask for the latest information on cooking frozen meat. They are wise enough to want to make the most of this new food by the right preparation and cooking.

Food scientists at a number of State experiment stations have been looking into this matter of cooking frozen meat. New York State and Minnesota have just recently published directions for preparing and cooking meat which has been frozen. The information I am passing along to you today comes from these stations.

Care is as important as cooking with frozen meat. You can keep frozen meat a number of days after it comes out of the freezer-locker <u>if</u> you have a place in your refrigerator cold enough to keep it frozen. But once the meat has thawed, you

must use it promptly for safety. Once the meat has become soft after freezing, you will not be wise to try to hold it over 24 hours even in the refrigerator.

You see, meat which has been frozen spoils more quickly than meat which has not been frozen. The freezing breaks down the fiber and makes the meat more tender. Then, the moisture on the surface of the defrosted meat is favorable to mold growth. So use frozen meat as soon as you can after it thaws. And when you bring frozen meat home from the locker or the store, put it in the refrigerator at once. During the time you keep it before cooking, keep it at a temperature of 50 degrees Fahrenheit, or below. How much meat you take from the locker at one time will depend on how large and how cold your refrigerator is at home.

The question women ask most often about cooking frozen meat is: "Does the meat have to thaw before I cook it, or can I put it on the stove while it is frozen?"

All the studies of frozen meat show that you are more likely to do a good job of cooking, if the meat is pretty well thawed before it goes on the stove. The New York Station says you don't have to thaw it completely, but to be sure of even cooking you should have it at least three-fourths thawed. You see, if you put a roast in the oven while it is still hard-frozen, the outside may get done before the center has thawed. The roast may come to the table looking nice and brown, but when you carve it you may find some raw, icy cold meat in the center. That is why it is a good idea to defrost meat before you put it on to cook.

The scientists have done a good deal of experimenting to find whether meat is best thawed slowly or allowed to thaw as fast as possible. You can defrost frozen meat in a few hours by letting it stand open on a rack in a pan on the kitchen table. Or you can defrost gradually over as many as 3 days in the refrigerator. The Minnesota Station advises that slow defrosting in the refrigerator is a good idea if you aren't going to need the meat for several days, but, of course, you must plan ahead for it. The New York Station recommends slow thawing in the

refrigerator because the meat loses the least juice that way--it doesn't drip so much as it thaws.

You need to know in advance how long this defrosting or thawing takes. The New York Station says a small piece of meat weighing 1 to 2 pounds takes from 5 to 10 hours to thaw in the refrigerator while a larger piece, such as a 4-pound roast, takes from 24 to 36 hours. Out in the warm air of the kitchen meat thaws much faster. At 70 degrees one pound of frozen meat takes 2 hours to thaw; 2 pounds 4 hours; and so on. A good stiff breeze will hurry the thawing. A pound package of meat standing in front of an electric fan will defrost in only 45 minutes.

But you may want to put the meat on to cook while it is still frozen. The point to remember if you put hard-frozen meat on the stove is that it will take from 15 to 25 minutes a pound longer to cook. And you will generally be wise to have the heat just slightly lower.

With this exception the rules for cooking frozen meat are the same as for cooking meat that has not been frozen. Once frozen meat is thawed, you cook it just as you would fresh meat. You will find it slightly more tender.

That's the news on using frozen meat from 2 State experiment stations.

ocOoo